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AUTHOR(S):

Nishimura, Takuo

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A Reply to Paul Standish

TAKUO NISHIMURA

Nara Women's University

It was quite regrettable that we did not have enough time to reply to Paul Standish's comments and develop the discussion in the round table at the International Network of Philosophers of Education (INPE) held last summer in Kyoto. The following is a memorandum of what I would have liked to reply and discuss in the round table.

Standish's comments were comprised of three parts. First: the question of how a philosophy of education drawing upon the Kyoto School is incorporated into educational practice. He asked, 'What are the implications of putting the ideas into practice?' and 'How are they translated into practice?' Second: the possibility of the Kyoto School philosophy of education to overcome the Western dichotomy of subject-object, and the question of whether there still remains some hypothesis of development or progress and some claim for foundation or founding. Third: he offered a different rationale for aesthetic education that respects 'impurity' and 'messiness' of human life and experience and a 'return to the ordinary', and intends to find a so called non-foundationalistic foundation for political-practical life in the aesthetic, which stands in contrast to Kitaro Nishida's and Motomori Kimura's ideas that seemed to give, as Standish realized, privilege to aesthetic experiences.

I thought it best to begin by responding to the third part because my report in the round table was mainly on the theory of aesthetic human transformation. The rationale for aesthetic education presented by Standish reminded me of Hannah Arendt's theory of politics based on aesthetic-political judgment. I asked him if such an understanding was appropriate or not. He answered that his idea was not restricted to one such as Arendt's but that my understanding was not necessarily wrong. The final question in Standish's comments regarded to what degree his idea of aesthetic education was complementary to and/or in a state of tension with the positions offered by the speakers. My answer to that question would be that 'it is both—complementary and at the same time in a state of tension'.

In the context of Schiller studies, Standish's idea also reminded me of Jürgen Habermas' interpretation of 'Aesthetic Letters', which placed the text on the genealogy of thought from Aristotle to Arendt that found political significance in aesthetic judgment. I consider that such an interpretation not only shows a typical interpretation of 'Aesthetic Letters', but is also a strong rationale for the educational and political importance of the aesthetic. At this point, I completely agree with Standish's idea.

On the other hand, however, I believe that the aesthetic has another possibility and that Kimura's interpretation of Schiller shows it. This possibility is not so called, 'Aristotelian,' as is Habermas' mentioned above, but should be called 'Platonic'. In my opinion, the aesthetic contains both possibilities—'Aristotelian' and 'Platonic'.

I must be quick to mention, however, that Kimura's conception of 'Idea' is different from that of Platonism. For Kimura, 'Idea' is not what exists beyond, or far away from, practice and leads it from there, but what generates, so to speak, in concrete phases of aesthetic practice each time, as he discussed using the metaphor,

'each stroke of the chisel'. I have argued in detail about the conception of the 'self-generating Idea' according to Kimura in my supplementary paper at the INPE round table.

Such a conception of a 'self-generating Idea', peculiar to Kimura and the Kyoto School, is linked with the first and second parts of Standish's comments. As I mentioned at the beginning of my report at the INPE round table, when Kimura said 'the human being is a form of existence that expresses itself formatively and is aware of its own formative expression', the meaning of 'expression' was not limited to aesthetic or artistic expression. The aesthetic and the arts are important simply as phenomena that most straightforwardly represent essence. I have also already argued in the supplementary paper that such an understanding of human existence is based on the thesis of 'oneness of praxis and poesis'. Even educational practice, so long as it is just such 'practice', is understood as follows: that which leads educational practice is not 'theory from above', but historical-physical 'Idea' generating precisely amid ordinary practice in each of the 'segments of our practice'. Such 'practice' does not require any 'foundation' outside of ordinary concrete practice, outside of each educational relationship and educational act. Therefore, just as artistic 'creation' cannot be reduced to method, neither can we denote an external 'method' for educational practice which is understood as such. The philosophy of education that understands educational practice as such does not have any answers to 'the questions the teachers and policy-makers would want to ask' which Standish dared to present. Or rather, it dares to give no answer to the questions. In this sense, assuming a basis of an ordinary scheme of 'theory-practice', this philosophy of education 'dares' to be non-practical. However, if an understanding of 'practice' such as Kimura's throws light on the essential structure of practice in general, or, avoiding such an essentialist manner of narrative, if a way such as Kimura's of narrating 'practice' is the most relevant to educational practitioners, this philosophy of education may be said to be the most 'practical'.

After the INPE round table, I, together with Tsunemi Tanaka, took part in a symposium held by the Japanese Society of Philosophy of Education that inquired into the relationship between the philosophy of education and the reality of education. In the symposium, we asked how the philosophy of education could, or should, be involved with the reality of education as compared with other 'positive' disciplines such as the psychology or the sociology of education. Unlike such 'positive' disciplines, the philosophy of education can neither guide teachers' practice directly nor give evidence to policy makers. Such a 'useless' philosophy of education is now regarded as having no reason to exist. The Kyoto School philosophy of education is the most typical of such 'useless' disciplines. Nevertheless, I venture to reject the need to be 'useful' in the naïve scheme of 'theory-practice' and claim that there are alternative methods of education or human transformation which have been hidden by just such naïve schemes. Though it seems to be as hopeless a project as 'planting apple trees on the last day of the world' (M. Luther), it might not necessarily be so, because nothing is as real and 'practical' for myself, as a teacher at university and a parent taking part in making a new School, as the understanding of education and human transformation expounded by Kimura. It is precisely this personal reality as an educational practitioner that is the basis of my venture.

But I would like to add that I also have a suspicion that the Kyoto School philosophy of education contains an inherent danger. If being in the 'locus' as 'absolute nothingness' is 'absolute affirmation of every act' as Kimura said when he interpreted Schiller's 'schöne Seele', is there any room for 'ethical' judgment? Can

'ethics' exist in the 'dialectic between Eros and Agape'? Does the standpoint of 'absolute affirmation of every act' rather contain the danger of losing a critical eye for preventing the corruption of education into one in which a human being is controlled by another predominant human being? These questions are the same as the problem of 'Honngaku Shisou' mentioned by Tanaka, a kind of 'Emanation' theory in Buddhism which 'believes in everything in Heaven and Earth to have an inherent power to attain nirvana' (Tanaka). It is this problem that I would like to discuss together when we consider practical possibilities of the Kyoto School philosophy of education.

Now let me return to the conception of 'Idea' peculiar to Kimura. Based on this conception, a reply to the second part of Standish's comments is possible. His question was whether 'a theory of becoming, especially under institutional pressure toward explicit formulation' can 'avoid sliding into claims regarding stages of development'. I think that asking such a question, or doubting that sight of 'the variety of human experience' may be lost in certain theories of progression or development, shows that we share a basic stance. The core of the Kyoto School philosophy of education never appears in the theory of development stages. If our reports reminded him of a kind of Buddhist theory of stages toward spiritual awakening, it was misleading. However, for the Kyoto School philosophy of education, the development theory is not what should be 'avoided'. On the contrary, the supposition of development stages and intention for progression can be positively placed as 'historical' factors of teachers and students, or their relationship in educational practice, that are always and already conditioned historically. Though I could not mention the historicity of 'the Inner' and 'the Outer' in the 'dialectical' structure of expression and self-generation of 'Idea' because my report in the INPE round table was exclusively focused on Kimura's interpretation of Schiller, I would like to ask you to refer to my supplementary paper about the problem of historicity of practice. What we would like to call into question is the problem that such factors of 'development' and 'progress' may be abstracted from living dynamics of practice and negatively operate to reduce the variety and liveliness of practice.

I consider it most appropriate to answer Standish's second question by referring to Satojo Yano's theory of 'development/becoming'. Yano compares 'development' with 'becoming'. The former intends to complete the identity of the subject after the model of 'labor' which purposely-rationally produces something useful. The latter is the transformation of life which cannot be integrated in 'development', the experience of ex-subject such as 'melting' and 'transcendence' contrasted with the identity of subject. Yano attaches importance to the meaning of the latter, or rather, the meaninglessness of the latter. Though the relative importance in his theory is obviously on 'becoming', the significance of 'development' is sufficiently recognized and placed in the theory. I consider his theory to be the most orthodox successor of the Kyoto School philosophy of education.

That completes how I would like to reply to Standish's comments, and I anticipate those comments will encourage discussion with other Japanese colleagues who were stimulated by them. Though the translatability of thoughts is always a serious problem, it was a reckless attempt for such a person of shallow learning as me to argue in English about the philosophy of the Kyoto School, which was already thoroughly done in 'the magnetic field of Japanese language' (Kenichi Iwaki). I am now keenly feeling the difficulty and realize why many wise predecessors were so cautious about making such an attempt. But struggling to pull myself away from the 'magnetic field' was a precious opportunity for me to study. If both 'Western-modern' and 'the traditional Japanese', which might to a certain extent also be a fiction of the modern,

are factors that cannot be disregarded for our historicity, an attempt should be made to talk 'in between them' despite the recklessness of the task. I hope the attempt would contribute to meaningful dialogue in international collaborations.

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